



**NARAL
Pro-Choice Connecticut**

**Appropriations Committee
Department of Public Health Budget
Testimony of Jillian Gilchrest, Executive Director
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut
February 18, 2010**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jillian Gilchrest and I am the executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut and Vice Chair to the Connecticut Coalition for Choice. NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut is a statewide political advocacy non-profit that works to guarantee every woman the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices and the Connecticut Coalition for Choice is comprised of 15 organizations that collectively represent over 130,000 individuals statewide.

I am here this evening to express my concerns with the Governor's proposed cuts to the Department of Public Health budget as they pertain to reproductive health, including:

- a significant cut to Family Planning Services,
- a 30% cut to AIDS services that would result 1997 funding levels, and
- a complete elimination of funding for the Fetal & Infant Mortality Review.

I understand that our state is in the midst of extremely difficult economic times, and I am merely cautioning you on the future financial impacts that these proposed budget cuts can have on our state and its citizens. One quarter of women ages 18-29 are uninsured, making them more likely than any other group to be uninsuredⁱ, so publicly funded family planning is a vital service that not only prevents unintended pregnancies but also unintended costs down the road.

In the U.S., more than 25 percent of new infections of HIV/AIDS are in women. And women of color are especially impacted by the disease, with HIV/AIDS being the leading cause of death for African American women aged 25 to 34.ⁱⁱ The Governor's proposed budget calls for a \$3 million cut to the AIDS services line item, leaving thousands of the 10,860 people living with HIV/AIDS in the state without access to healthcare, medications, food, insurance, and housing.

Our state and our country have done a good job of preventing perinatal transmission of HIV/AIDS, transmission from mother to child during pregnancy, labor, delivery or breastfeeding. If the state cuts \$3

NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut
Jillian Gilchrest, MSW
860-523-1227
jillian@pro-choicect.org

million from HIV/AIDS services, we risk having women infected with HIV/AIDS not receiving the proper prenatal healthcare that they need.

Lastly, the Governor's budget has proposed to eliminate completely the funding for the state's Fetal & Infant Mortality Review programs. Fetal and infant mortality review is an important public health strategy for identifying risk factors for perinatal morbidity and mortality and for developing information that can be used to design community interventions to improve the health of women and infants.

The overall goal of Fetal & Infant Mortality Review is to enhance the health and well-being of women, infants and families by improving the community resources and service delivery systems. It would be a huge disservice to our state, in particular, our state's racial and ethnic minorities who experience greater numbers of fetal and infant death, to eliminate funding for the Fetal & Infant Mortality Review.

I thank you for your time this evening and for the work you have ahead of you.

ⁱ Raising Women's Voices, 2009

ⁱⁱ Women & HIV/AIDS, women'shealth.gov